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CLASSICS
Leighton Veris gratia
Vaughan Williams An Oxford Elegy
THAT SWEET CITY
ROWAN ATKINSON
NICK PRITCHARD
CHOIR OF THE QUEEN'S COLLEGE, OXFORD
BRITTEN SINFONIA
OWEN REES

THAT SWEET CITY

Leighton *Veris gratia Op. 6* | Vaughan Williams *An Oxford Elegy*

Veris gratia, Op. 6		Kenneth Leighton	
A Cantata based on Mediæval Latin Lyrics			
1	Prelude		[2.11]
2	Aubade		[3.16]
3	Lament *tenor*		[5.26]
4	Elegy		[3.14]
5	Eclogue *soprano, flute, chorus*		[3.16]
6	Paean		[3.15]
7	Hymn to Cypris		[4.14]
8	Erotikon *tenor*		[2.00]
9	Nocturne		[3.50]
10	Epilogue		[8.18]
11	**An Oxford Elegy**	Ralph Vaughan Williams	[22.46]
	Total timings:		[1.01.47]

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This recording pairs a work by one composer – Kenneth Leighton – who was in the first flush of his creative career with a work by the senior figure in English music – Ralph Vaughan Williams – who was approaching the end of his life. The two pieces are linked by the circumstances of their first performance and by their connections to Oxford and to The Queen's College. The works both received their premieres at Queen's, in the college music society's summer concerts of 1951 and 1952 respectively. One – the cantata *Veris gratia* – was composed by Leighton when he was still an undergraduate student at the college, while the other – *An Oxford Elegy* – belongs to the last period of Ralph Vaughan Williams's long career: he was 79 when he attended the première. Although both are evocations of the pastoral and the bucolic, Leighton's work celebrates young love in spring and summer through the hedonistic poetry of the medieval *Carmina Burana* (Leighton studied Classics at Queen's), while Vaughan Williams's is filled with nostalgia for an idyllic past, evoked through the poetry of Matthew Arnold. Stylistic threads nevertheless link the works, since Leighton at this early stage in his creative life was strongly influenced by the school of English composition within which Vaughan Williams was a seminal figure.

Leighton, born in Wakefield in 1929, went up to The Queen's College – which had long-established Northern connections – in 1947. From his second year he combined his study of Classics with work for the BMus degree in Music. Bernard Rose, the College's Organist (director of music) and conductor of the Eglesfield Musical Society, was his tutor for composition, although it is worth noting that Leighton was already a published composer. Rose and Leighton were to become close friends, and it was Rose who introduced Leighton to Vaughan Williams and to Gerald Finzi, with the latter of whom Leighton likewise developed a strong connection. Writing about his cantata *Veris gratia* and the suite of the same title (Op. 9) for oboe, cello and strings written at the same period, Leighton emphasised the inspiration and encouragement that he received from Finzi at the time of their composition (he dedicated the suite to Finzi), and declared the deep influence which the 'pure lyricism' of Finzi's songs had upon him. Comparisons have also been drawn between the *Veris gratia* suite and Vaughan Williams's *Flos campi* (for solo viola, wordless chorus, and orchestra) of 1925, in which each movement is headed by a verse from the Song of Songs, evoking ideas of the return of spring and love, as in Leighton's work. *Flos campi* received its first Oxford performance in 1948, during Leighton's

time at Queen's and just two years before he wrote the two *Veris gratia* works. Leighton likewise preceded the movements of his suite with text, in this case from medieval Latin lyrics.

The *Veris gratia* cantata was completed in December 1950, and dedicated to Rose and the Eglesfield Musical Society, who gave the first performance at Queen's on 14 June 1951, at the end of Leighton's last term in Oxford. The solo flautist, Delia Ruhm, and tenor, David Galliver, were both at the beginnings of their successful careers. (Galliver had completed his undergraduate studies at New College in 1950.) The reviewers of the première in the *Oxford Mail* and *Oxford Magazine* admired the work's 'freshness and vitality' and Leighton's vibrant responses to the 'vivid pictures and evocations of springtime' in the texts, while the writer in the *Oxford Magazine* commented that the 'exuberant melodic invention which has stamped Leighton's early works' was 'coupled, now, with a more mature sense of the unity and development of the whole'. Leighton derived the texts – preserved in the *Carmina Burana* manuscript of the monastery of Benedicteuern, and most familiar now from Carl Orff's settings of 1936 – from a then well known anthology edited by Helen Waddell, *Mediæval Latin Lyrics* (published in 1929). The exception is the *Lament* 3, which is Catullus's famous epitaph for his mistress Lesbia's pet sparrow. As a postscript to the original score of the cantata Leighton added a stanza from the anonymous poem 'Levis exurgit Zephyrus', from which his title 'Veris gratia' – which has the dual meaning (as Leighton may have intended) 'grace/beauty of spring' and 'For the sake of spring' – derives. Leighton incorporated and adapted a good deal of existing music in creating the cantata: the *Eclogue* 5 is a reworking of perhaps his best known work, *Lully, lulla, thou little tiny child*, which seems to have been first performed at a carol service for Leighton's old school in Wakefield Cathedral in December 1947, at the end of his first term as a student at Queen's. The setting of Catullus's *Lament* 3 for solo tenor, flute, and strings dates from August 1950, and he also drew in some places upon the orchestral *Veris gratia* suite composed earlier that year. The work received one further performance in 1952, where it was paired with Vaughan Williams's *Serenade to Music*, but it then fell into obscurity until a performance in Edinburgh in 2011. This is its first recording.

The music of *Veris gratia* is luxuriantly rich and varied in melodic invention, harmonic and tonal colour, and texture, including displays of the composer's enduring love of counterpoint.

The cantata is framed by dawn and dusk. Leighton entitled the second movement *Aubade* 2, a morning love song or a song greeting the sunrise, and the strings' hushed opening of the *Prelude* 1 might suggest pre-dawn calm, broken by the song of the solo flute which heralds a brilliant sunrise. The harmonically uncanny stasis with which the *Prelude* ends is dramatically dispelled by the spring festivities of the *Aubade*. Leighton bound these movements together thematically: the motive from the sombre beginning of the *Prelude* becomes the rousing string introduction to *Aubade*, and the flute's melody from the *Prelude* punctuates the celebratory dawn song and recurs later in the *Elegy* 4. Another flute theme links the *Elegy* with the brooding and impassioned orchestral *Nocturne* 9 towards the end of the cantata. In the concluding *Epilogue* 10 the rapt stillness of the choir's entry evokes the quietude of a twilight landscape illuminated by 'Diana's crystal lamp', the moon. Leighton ends this movement – and the work – tellingly with an unaccompanied choral peroration ('Applaudamus igitur…'), echoing the orchestra's stately introduction to the movement, which is the only extended passage of the cantata found also in the orchestral *Veris gratia* suite, where likewise it occurs in the final *Epilogue*. Here the singers contrast those blessed with Venus's gift of love and those who labour without reward or hope.

The solo flute used throughout *Veris gratia* evokes birdsong at various points, and takes on a directly pictorial role in two of the existing pieces imported into the cantata or recomposed for it. In Catullus's *Lament* 3 it portrays Lesbia's pet sparrow, as it hops chirping on Lesbia's lap. Leighton's inspired reworking of his setting of the Coventry Carol, *Lully, lulla, thou little tiny child*, as the *Eclogue* 5 fits its new text and bucolic context so well that one would never guess that the music was originally conceived with such a contrasting text. Here the soprano soloist from the carol is transformed into the Muse who enters with a song, 'a sweet melody', with which the chorus join, and in the middle verses the flute – absent from the carol – joins in to represent the singing of the lark, nightingale, swallow, swan (at the moment of death), and finally the cuckoo: for the last of these Leighton draws on the falling-third motive which reccurs in the solo part of the original carol, and transfigures it into the cuckoo's calls of the solo flute, and these calls echo the soprano throughout the concluding section of the piece.

The falling thirds of these calls then appear – in radically different guise – within the muscular opening string theme of the following *Paean* 6, a link which is typical of Leighton's concern to bind his cantata into a whole. This hedonistic

song of love, with its rousing refrain 'Io, Io, totus floreo…', is the most earthy and energetic movement: the pounding ostinato string chords with off-beat accents at 'Tua mecum laudit virginitas' are an obvious reference – fittingly given the text here – to 'The Augurs of Spring: Dances of the Young Girls' from Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*. Carl Orff's setting of this same *Carmina Burana* poem (albeit with a different selection of stanzas) likewise uses heavy ostinato rhythms and syncopated accents. Although Orff's piece, composed in the 1930s, received its UK première – in the summer of 1951, at the Royal Festival Hall as part of the Festival of Britain – after Leighton composed *Veris gratia*, Leighton may have known it through the published score.

In contrast, *Hymn to Cypris* 7 evokes a sylvan idyll, the speaker beholding a choir of maidens – the movement is scored for sopranos and altos – and finding rest in a 'valley of flowers', listening to the songs of blackbird and nightingale, the latter again portrayed by the flute. The tenor soloist then dispels this arcadian dream with the restless *Erotikon* 8, bitterly lamenting the pains of unrequited love.

Vaughan Williams enjoyed long and close associations with Oxford, of which *An Oxford Elegy* 11 was one of the most important manifestations. Among those in Oxford who promoted his music were three successive Organists (that is, directors of music) at Queen's: Maurice Besly in the 1920s, Reginald Jacques in the '30s, and Bernard Rose, who arranged for *An Oxford Elegy* to receive its première at Queen's and conducted the performance. As a student in the '30s Rose had come to know Vaughan Williams when attending conducting courses at the house of Sir Adrian Boult. A lover of Matthew Arnold's poetry, Vaughan Williams harboured for decades the idea of composing an opera inspired by Arnold's *The Scholar Gipsy*, the poem which he eventually used as the main text of *An Oxford Elegy*, combining it with elements from Arnold's companion-piece, *Thyrsis*, an elegy for his friend and fellow poet Arthur Hugh Clough. Arnold became a Fellow of Oriel College, Oxford, in 1845, and was elected Professor of Poetry at the University (a largely honorary position) in 1857. *The Scholar Gipsy*, published in 1853, was inspired by a story in Joseph Glanvill's *The Vanity of Dogmitising* (published in the 1660s), in which a poor Oxford student abandons his studies to join a group of gypsies and to absorb their wisdom. Arnold wrote to his brother that his poem was 'meant to fix the remembrance of those delightful wanderings of ours in the Cumner hills

before they were quite effaced'. This poem and its later companion-piece *Thyrsis* take us on such wanderings, in deeply nostalgic and romantic celebrations of the unspoilt pastoral landscapes of the hills overlooking Oxford, and of the views they afford down to 'that sweet city with her dreaming spires'. The speaker wanders in search of the scholar gipsy, as he recalls the tales that he 'travels yet the loved hillside' despite the passage of two centuries, and whom he believes once to have encountered himself 'in winter, on the causeway chill…wrapt in thy cloak and battling with the snow'. The pathos of the poetry springs in part from its oscillations between faith – in the endurance of both the beloved landscapes and the scholar gypsy who haunts them – and doubt, despair, and the sadness of a lost idyll and of lost companionship. Vaughan Williams's melodrama captures exquisitely both the finely drawn nature pictures and the shifting emotional landscapes of Arnold's texts, vacillating between melancholy and rapture. An anecdote of Vaughan Williams's friend Henry Ley (Organist of Christ Church) has been linked to the germination of the composer's project to set *The Scholar Gipsy*: after Vaughan Williams had spent a day in Oxford trying out the draft score of his *Hugh the Drover*, with his friends Hugh Percy Allen (Organist of New College), the composer George Butterworth (then teaching at Radley College), and Ley, the companions decided to undertake an all-night walk through the Oxfordshire countryside, returning after dawn the next day. Some four decades later, on 20 June 1952, The Times reviewed the first public performance of *An Oxford Elegy* the previous evening: 'Where but in Oxford could any setting of Matthew Arnold's "The Scholar Gipsy" and "Thyrsis" have its first performance? Here in the hall of Queen's College to-night the Eglesfield Musical Society introduced Vaughan Williams's latest work…essentially a musical distillation of Arnold's retrospect and of his evocation of the tree-crowned hill, the vale, and the three lone weirs'. Ursula Vaughan Williams, the composer's wife, said of the performance that 'the effect of the *Elegy* was extraordinary; Steuart Wilson [the narrator]…had tears running down his cheeks: he was mildly outraged that he should be weeping over a poem about Oxford. But they were enjoyable tears, luxuriously nostalgic.' Wilson had already performed an early version of the work in a private 'try through' (as the composer put it) at Vaughan Williams's house in 1949, and by July 1951 at the latest (shortly after the première of Leighton's *Veris gratia*) Bernard Rose was in correspondence with the composer about performing the finalised work at Queen's.

Vaughan Williams gave the delivery of Arnold's poetry principally to the 'reciter' (as he termed it in early correspondence about the piece) supported by orchestra and/or wordless chorus, but he highlighted certain passages by having the singers repeat them after the narrator has spoken them, including – most tellingly and movingly – the final quatrain: 'Why faintest thou? I wander'd till I died. Roam on! The light we sought is shining still. Our tree yet crowns the hill, our Scholar travels yet the loved hillside.' Vaughan Williams's autograph score, presented to the Bodleian Library in Oxford after his death by his widow Ursula, shows the great care he took over the coordination of music and narration (given the issue that the narration could not be precisely timed), and in particular his efforts to avoid 'empty' passages in performance where the narrator reached the end of a section well before the orchestra: he reduced the length of the music in several passages, presumably reflecting the experience of trying the piece out at his home with Steuart Wilson, and perhaps also in the performance at Queen's. Other passages were left for the choir alone to present, including the memorable homage to the beauty of Oxford's 'dreaming spires' and the haunting evocation of 'the full moon and the white evening star'. The piece's emotional journey is in places turbulent and passionate, as in the outbursts of lament at the loss of Thyrsis, and it bears in many places a world-weariness which is the antithesis of Leighton's exuberant offering. But overall it is infused with qualities of timelessness reflecting the poetry's concerns with human endurance and the enduring cycles of nature, evoked not least in the echoing of the work's poignant opening theme at its very end.

Owen Rees © 2024

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Translations from the Latin are by or with the assistance of Isobel Hodgson and Sam Troy.

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Kenneth Leighton at The Queen's College

TEXTS & TRANSLATIONS

Veris gratia

2 **Aubade**

Iamiam rident prata,	*Now the meadows are laughing,*
iamiam virgines	*now the maidens*
iocundantur, terre	*are full of delight, the earth's*
ridet facies.	*face is smiling.*
Estas nunc apparuit,	*Summer now appears,*
ornatusque florum lete claruit.	*and the flowers' attire is joyfully bright.*
Nemus revirescit,	*The forest is springing up again,*
frondent frutices,	*the bushes are sprouting,*
hiems seva cessit:	*savage winter has given way:*
leti iuvenes,	*O happy youths,*
congaudete floribus,	*rejoice in the flowers,*
amor vos allicit iam virginibus.	*love now draws you to the maidens.*
Ergo militemus	*Therefore let us fight*
simul Veneri,	*together for Venus*
tristia vitemus,	*let us shun sadness,*
nos qui teneri,	*we who are young,*
visus et colloquia,	*sight and conversation,*
spes amorque trahant nos ad gaudia.	*hope and love draw us to joy.*

3 **Lament**

Lugete, o Veneres Cupidinesque,	*Mourn, oh Venuses and Cupids,*
et quantum est hominum venustiorum:	*and as many of you as love beauty:*
passer mortuus est meæ puellæ,	*my girl's sparrow is dead,*
passer, deliciæ meæ puellæ,	*the sparrow, my girl's dear pet,*
quem plus illa oculis suis amabat.	*whom she loved more than her own eyes.*
Nam mellitus erat suamque norat	*For he was honey-sweet and knew her*
ipsam tam bene quam puella matrem,	*as well as a girl knows her own mother,*
nec sese a gremio illius movebat,	*and he did not move from her lap,*
sed circumsiliens modo huc modo illuc	*but hopping around, now hither, now thither*
ad solam dominam usque pipiabat.	*kept on chirping to his mistress alone.*
Qui nunc it per iter tenebricosum	*Now he undertakes a shadowy journey*
illuc, unde negant redire quemquam.	*to that place whence they say nobody returns.*
At vobis male sit, malæ tenebræ	*A curse on you, evil shades*
Orci, quæ omnia bella devoratis:	*of Hades, who swallow up all beautiful things:*
tam bellum mihi passerem abstulistis.	*You have robbed me of such a pretty sparrow.*
O factum male! O miselle passer!	*Oh, wicked deed! Oh poor little sparrow!*
Tua nunc opera meæ puellæ	*Now, because of you, my girl's*
flendo turgiduli rubent ocelli.	*swollen little eyes grow red with weeping.*

(Catullus)

5 **Eclogue**

Musa venit carmine,
dulci modulamine:
pariter cantemus,
ecce virent omnia.

The muse comes with a song,
a sweet melody:
let us sing together,
behold all things are green.

Mane carrit alaudula,
lupilulat cornicula,
iubente natura
Philomena queritur
antiqua de iactura.

In the morning the lark carouses,
the chough chirps,
at the behest of nature
the nightingale complains
of the ancient loss.

Hirundo iam finsat,
cignus dulce trinsat
memorando fata,
cuculat et cuculus
per nemora vernata.

Now the swallow is singing,
the swan sings sweetly
remembering her death,
the cuckoo sings 'cuckoo'
amid the trees of spring.

Patet et in gramine
iocundo rivus murmure.
Locus est festivus,
ventus cum temperie
susurrat tempestivus.

The brook clearly murmurs
playfully in the meadow.
It is a place of festival;
with the mild weather the winds
of spring whisper gently.

6 **Paean**

Tempus est iocundum,
o virgines,
modo congaudete
vos iuvenes

It is the time of joy
O maidens,
now rejoice together with them,
you young men!

O. o. totus floreo,
iam amore virginali
totus ardeo,
novus novus amor
est, quo pereo.

O! O! I am all aflower,
now with first love
I am all afire!
A new love
it is of which I am dying.

Cantat Philomela
sic dulciter,
et modulans auditur;
intus caleo

The nightingale sings
thus sweetly,
and is heard singing;
I am afire within.

O. o. totus floreo…

O! O! I am all aflower…

Tua mecum ludit
virginitas,
tua me detrudit
simplicitas.

Your virginity
plays with me,
your naivety
pushes me back.

O. o. totus floreo…

O! O! I am all aflower…

Sile, Philomena,
surge cantilena
de pectore.

Hush nightingale,
Arise, song,
from my heart.

O. o. totus floreo…

O! O! I am all aflower…

Veni, domicella,
cum gaudio,
veni, veni, bella,
iam pereo.

Come, my mistress,
with joy,
come, come, fair one,
already I die.

O. o. totus floreo…

O! O! I am all aflower…

7 **Hymn to Cypris**

Ecce, chorus virginum,
tempore vernali,
dum solis incendium
radios equali
moderatur ordine,
iubilo semoto,
fronde pausa tilie
Cypridis in voto!

*Behold, a chorus of maidens!
While in the springtime,
the sun's blaze
arranges its rays
in even array,
I rejoice at a distance
(the foliage of the lime-tree is my place of rest)
in devotion to Venus.*

In hac valle florida
floreus, fragratus,
intra septa lilia
locus purpuratus,
dum garritus merule
dulciter alludit,
philomena carmine
dulcia concludit.

*In this valley of flowers
is a floral, fragrant,
purple-hued place,
within an enclosure of lilies.
While the chattering blackbird
plays sweetly,
the nightingale completes the sweet music
with her song.*

8 **Erotikon**

Dum estas inchoatur
ameno tempore,
Phebusque dominatur
depulso frigore.

*While summer is begun
and the weather is fair,
and Phoebus is lord
having driven out the cold.*

Unius in amore
puelle vulneror
multimodo dolore,
per quem et atteror.

*in the love of one
girl I am wounded
with many a pain
and I am crushed by this.*

Ut mei misereatur,
ut me recipiat,
et declinetur ad me,
et ita desinat!

*If only she would take pity on me,
if only she would accept me,
and lean towards me,
and in this way give in!*

10 **Epilogue**

Dum Diane vitrea
sero lampas oritur,
et a fratris rosea
luce succenditur,
dulcis aura zephyri
spirans omnes etheri
nubes tollit;
sic emollit
vi chordarum pectora,
et inmutat
cor quod nutat
ad amoris pignora.

*When Diana's crystal
lamp rises at dusk,
and is kindled by the rosy
light of her brother,
the sweet breath of the west wind
with its exhalation removes all clouds
from the sky.
In the same way, that wind relieves
men's breasts by the power of its strings,
and transforms
the heart that wavers
into pledges of love.*

O quam felix est
antidotum soporis,
quod curarum tempestates
sedat et doloris!

*O how blessed
is the antidote of sleep,
which assuages storms of cares
and sorrow!*

Applaudamus igitur
rerum novitati.
Felix qui diligitur
voti compos grati,
dono letus Veneris,
cuius ara teneris
floribus odorat.

*Let us therefore applaud
the novelty of things.
Happy is he who is loved
and has achieved his welcome desire,
made happy by the gift of Venus,
whose altar with tender
flowers is fragrant.*

Miser e contrario
qui sublato bravio
sine spe laborat.

Wretched on the other hand
is he who, without reward,
labours without hope.

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11 **An Oxford Elegy**

Go, for they call you, Shepherd, from the hill;
Go, Shepherd, and untie the wattled cotes;
No longer leave thy wistful flock unfed,
Nor let thy bawling fellows rack their throats,
Nor the cropp'd grasses shoot another head.
But when the fields are still,
And the tired men and dogs all gone to rest,
And only the white sheep are sometimes seen
Cross and recross the strips of moon-blanch'd green;
Come Shepherd, and again begin the quest.

Here will I sit and wait,
While to my ear from uplands far away
The bleating of the folded flocks is borne,
With distant cries of reapers in the corn –
All the live murmur of a summer's day.

Screen'd is this nook o'er the high, half-reap'd field,
And here till sundown, Shepherd, will I be.
Through the thick corn the scarlet poppies peep,
And round green roots and yellowing stalks I see
Pale blue convolvulus in tendrils creep:
And air-swept lindens yield
Their scent, and rustle down their perfumed showers
Of bloom on the bent grass where I am laid,
And bower me from the August sun with shade;
And the eye travels down to Oxford's towers:
That sweet city with her dreaming spires,
She needs not summer for beauty's heightening,
Lovely all times she lies, lovely today!

Come, let me read the oft-read tale again:
The story of that Oxford scholar poor,
Who, one summer morn forsook his friends,
And came, as most men deem'd, to little good,
But came to Oxford and his friends no more.
But rumours hung about the country-side,
That the lost Scholar long was seen to stray,
Seen by rare glimpses, pensive and tongue-tied,
And I myself seem half to know thy looks,
And put the shepherds, Wanderer, on thy trace;

Or in my boat I lie
Moor'd to the cool bank in the summer heats,
'Mid wide grass meadows which the sunshine fills,
And watch the warm green-muffled Cumnor hills,
And wonder if thou haunt'st their shy retreats.
Leaning backwards in a pensive dream,
And fostering in thy lap a heap of flowers
Pluck'd in shy fields and distant Wychwood bowers,
And thine eyes resting on the moonlit stream,
Still waiting for the spark from Heaven to fall.

And once, in winter, on the causeway chill
Where home through flooded fields foot-travellers go,
Have I not pass'd thee on the wooden bridge
Wrapt in thy cloak and battling with the snow,
Thy face tow'rd Hinksey and its wintry ridge?
And thou hast climb'd the hill
And gain'd the white brow of the Cumnor range;
Turn'd once to watch, while thick the snowflakes fall,
The line of festal light in Christ Church hall –
Then sought thy straw in some sequester'd grange.

But what – I dream! Two hundred years are flown;
And thou from earth art gone
Long since and in some quiet churchyard laid –
Some country nook, where o'er thy unknown grave
Tall grasses and white flowering nettles wave,
Under a dark red-fruited yew-tree's shade.

No, no, thou hast not felt the lapse of hours.
Thou waitest for the spark from Heaven! and we,
Ah, do not we, Wanderer, await it too?
See, 'tis no foot of unfamiliar men
Today from Oxford up your pathway strays!
Here came I often, often, in old days;
Thyrsis and I; we still had Thyrsis then.

Runs it not here, the track by Childsworth Farm,
Up past the wood, to where the elm-tree crowns
The hill behind whose ridge the sunset flames?
The signal-elm, that looks on Ilsley Downs,
The Vale, the three lone weirs, the youthful Thames? –
That single elm-tree bright
Against the west – I miss it! is it gone?
We prized it dearly; while it stood, we said,
Our friend, the Scholar Gipsy, was not dead;
While the tree lived, he in these fields lived on.
Needs must I, with heavy heart
Into the world and wave of men depart;
But Thyrsis of his own will went away.

So have I heard the cuckoo's parting cry,
From the wet field, through the vext garden-trees,
Come with the volleying rain and tossing breeze:
The bloom is gone, and with the bloom go I!
Too quick despairer, wherefore wilt thou go?

Soon will the high Midsummer pomps come on,
Soon will the musk carnations break and swell,
Soon shall we have gold-dusted snapdragon,
Sweet-William with his homely cottage-smell,
And stocks in fragrant blow;
Roses that down the alleys shine afar,
And open, jasmine-muffled lattices,
And groups under the dreaming garden-trees,
And the full moon, and the white evening-star.

He hearkens not! light comer, he is flown!
What matters it? next year he will return,
And we shall have him in the sweet spring-days,
With whitening hedges, and uncrumpling fern,
And blue-bells trembling by the forest-ways,
And scent of hay new-mown.
But Thyrsis never more we swains shall see.

Yet, Thyrsis, let me give my grief its hour
In the old haunt, and find our tree-topp'd hill.
I know these slopes; who knows them if not I? –
But many a dingle on the loved hill-side,
With thorns once studded, old, white-blossom'd trees,
Where thick the cowslips grew, and far, descried,
High tower'd the spikes of purple orchises,
Hath since our day put by
The coronals of that forgotten time.
They are all gone, and thou art gone as well.

Yes, thou art gone! and round me too the night
In ever-nearing circle weaves her shade.
I see her veil draw soft across the day,
And long the way appears, which seem'd so short
And high the mountain-tops, in cloudy air,
The mountain-tops where is the throne of Truth.

There thou art gone, and me thou leavest here
Sole in these fields; yet will I not despair.
Despair I will not, while I yet descry
That lonely Tree against the western sky.
Fields where soft sheep from cages pull the hay,
Woods with anemones in flower till May
Know him a wanderer still.
Then let in thy voice a whisper often come,
To chase fatigue and fear:

Why faintest thou? I wander'd till I died.
Roam on! The light we sought is shining still.
Our tree yet crowns the hill,
Our Scholar travels yet the loved hillside.

Matthew Arnold (1822-1888), adapted from *The Scholar Gypsy* and *Thyrsis.*

ROWAN ATKINSON

Rowan Atkinson is an actor and writer widely regarded as among the funniest and most influential in British comedy history. After several years garnering critical acclaim, he found national prominence with *Not the Nine O'Clock News*. Atkinson followed this by taking on the eponymous, starring roles, in *Blackadder* and *Mr. Bean*, both of which he co-created.

He followed the huge success of both shows with iconic roles in *Love Actually* and *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, before appearing in the hugely popular *Johnny English* films, in the titular role as an intellectually challenged yet confident spy. More recently Rowan co-created and starred in the hit Netflix show *Man vs Bee.*

The ongoing, worldwide success of these characters have secured his place in the British Comedy firmament.

© Alastair Muir

NICK PRITCHARD

Born in West Sussex, Nick Pritchard was an inaugural member of the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment's (OAE) 'Rising Stars' scheme and is a Samling artist. Described as a 'masterly Evangelist' in *The Guardian*, he has sung the role in Bach's *St John* and *Matthew* Passions around the world and his recording of the St John Passion (Evangelist) for Deutsche Grammophon with Sir John Eliot Gardiner was nominated for a Grammy Award for Best Choral Performance (2023).

On the concert platform he has performed with ensembles including Concerto Köln, Les Talens Lyriques, Les Violons du Roy, The English Concert, Early Opera Company, Philharmonia Orchestra, The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Britten Sinfonia, the Monteverdi Choir and Orchestra, La Nuova Musica at the BBC Proms, and L'Orchestre de Chambre de Paris.

Operatic roles include Oronte *Alcina* in a new Tim Albery production for Opera North, Lysander *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Aldeburgh Festival's 70th Anniversary), Tamino *Die Zauberflöte* (Glyndebourne on Tour and for Irish National Opera and Peter Whelan), Prologue *The Turn of the Screw* and Ferrando *Così fan tutte* (Opera Holland

© Nick James

Park), Amphinomus *The Return of Ulysses* (Royal Opera House), Purcell's *The Indian Queen* (Opéra de Lille), Henry Crawford *Mansfield Park*, Colonel Fairfax *The Yeomen of the Guard* (The Grange Festival), Acis *Acis and Galatea* (London Handel Festival), and Telemaco *The Return of Ulysses* and Mercurio *La Calisto*, both for English Touring Opera.

CHOIR OF THE QUEEN'S COLLEGE, OXFORD

Soprano
Sophie Akka
Miriam Alsop
Saskia Bibb
Ischia Gooda
Alaw Grug Evans
Tallulah Horton
Felicity Howard
Tiggy Jones
Jemima Kinley
Rosanna Milner
Rose Olver
Jemima Price
Elizabeth Vineall

Alto
Lucy Barker
Sadie Bosher
Oisin Byrne
Peter Dockrill
Isobel Hodgson
Anna Power
Ellie Stamp
Anna Thomas

Tenor
Matthew Rogers
Samuel Teague
Luke Sitaraman
Sam Troy
Ashley Turnell
George Vyvyan

Bass
Bastian Bohrmann
Tony Cowen
Fred Duffen
Ben Gilchrist
Jonathan Hampshire
Edwin Hughes
Matthew Oulton
Ben Watkins

Organ Scholars
Luke Mitchell
Rudyard Cook

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'An undoubted jewel in Britain's choral scene' (*BBC Music Magazine*), the Choir of The Queen's College Oxford is among the finest and most active university choirs in the UK. Its extensive concert schedule involves appearances across the UK and abroad, including work with the Academy of Ancient Music, the Britten Sinfonia, and the Oxford Philharmonic Orchestra. It regularly tours abroad, and concert tours have included China, Taiwan, the USA, Sri Lanka, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, France, the Low Countries, and Germany. The choir's wide-ranging repertory includes a rich array of Renaissance and Baroque music and contemporary works. The group broadcasts regularly on BBC Radio, and during the academic year it provides the music for regular services in the splendid Baroque chapel of The Queen's College. Among its recordings on Signum Classics, *Carols from Queen's* enjoyed nine weeks in the Specialist Classical Charts, was 'Drive Feature Album of the Week' on *Classic FM*, and was a *Telegraph* Christmas pick; *A New Heaven* and *The House of the Mind* both went straight to no. 1 in the Specialist Classical Chart in their first week of sales; and a recording of music by the great Tudor composer John Taverner, received a Diapason d'or and was described by *Diapason* as 'a splendid triumph of English choral art at its best'. Queen's Choir has also recorded for film in the famous Abbey Road Studios, and appears on the Grammy-nominated soundtrack of the Warner-Brothers film *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince.*

www.queenschoir.com
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BRITTEN SINFONIA

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Violin II Miranda Dale, Suzanne Loze, Anna Bradley, Bridget Davey, Paula Clifton-Everest
Violas Daisy Spiers, Rachel Byrt, Emma Sheppard, Laura Cooper
Cellos Ben Chappell, Joy Hawley, William Clark-Maxwell
Double bass Ben Russell, Phoebe Clarke
Flute David Cuthbert
Oboes Peter Facer, Emma Feilding
Clarinets Joy Farrall, Stephen Williams
Bassoon Nikolaj Henriques
Horns Richard Bayliss, Tim Anderson
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Britten Sinfonia is a different kind of orchestra. It is defined not by the traditional figurehead of a principal conductor, but by the dynamic and democratic meeting of its outstanding individual players and the broad range of their collaborators – from Steve Reich, Thomas Adès and Alison Balsom to Pagrav Dance Company and Anoushka Shankar.

Rooted in the East of England, where it is the only professional orchestra working throughout the region, Britten Sinfonia also has a national and international reputation as one of today's finest ensembles. It is renowned for its adventurous programming and stunningly high-quality performances, and equally for its record of commissioning new music, nurturing new composing talent, and inspiring schoolchildren, hospital patients and communities across the East of England.

Britten Sinfonia is Resident Orchestra at Saffron Hall in Essex and is resident in Norwich, and performs regularly at London's Barbican and Wigmore Hall, alongside festivals such as the BBC Proms, Brighton, Norfolk & Norwich, and Aldeburgh. It is a BBC Radio 3 Broadcast Partner and has award-winning recordings on several record labels.

OWEN REES

Owen Rees is both an acclaimed choral director and an internationally recognised scholar of Renaissance music, particularly from Spain, Portugal, and England. He is Professor of Music at the University of Oxford, and Fellow in Music and Organist (Director of Music) at The Queen's College, and he also directs the ensemble Contrapunctus. His work as a conductor has taken him to many parts of the world, including the USA, China, Spain, Portugal, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, France, Norway, Sweden, and the Netherlands. His recordings have four times been shortlisted for the *Gramophone* Early Music Award, have been selected as Editor's Choice in *Gramophone* and Choral and Song Choice in *BBC Music Magazine*, and featured in the '20 Classical Recordings of the Year' 2015 in *The Sunday Times*. His CDs with Contrapunctus, Queen's and other choirs, on the Signum, Hyperion, and Avie labels, encompass a remarkably wide variety of choral repertory from the Renaissance to contemporary works. *BBC Music Magazine* recently hailed his interpretations of choral music as 'revelatory and even visionary'. He has brought to the concert hall and recording studio substantial repertories of magnificent Renaissance and Baroque music, including many previously unknown or little-known works, and he has played a leading role in revealing the glories of Portuguese Renaissance polyphony to an international audience. As a scholar, Owen Rees has published widely on many of the foremost Renaissance composers, including Byrd, Josquin, Morales, and Victoria. His award-winning book about the Victoria Requiem was published by Cambridge University Press in 2019.

© João Manita

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Engineer – Tom Lewington
Assistants – Mike Hatch and Oscar Farrell

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